

THE
T R I A L
OF
A B R A H A M,
K A DRAMATIC POEM.

From the Author, W. Farrer of Canby



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M,DCC,XC.

THE
M A H A B A

MEMORIAL POEM



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THE PREFACE.

THE TRIAL of ABRAHAM, as recorded in the book of Genesis, is a most illustrious example of religious obedience. And, though it has been occasionally perverted to an argument of cavil, in its more simple and obvious design, it may furnish matter for much devout meditation, and by candid inference may lead to the improvement of piety and virtue. With this intention it has been selected as a subject of practical discourse by many pious and respectable Divines. A Sermon is the most direct and obvious mode of moral and religious instruction. Yet the Drama, when applied to its best and noblest purpose, may dispute the advantage over an abstract discourse, as it may be said to “body forth the forms” of Virtue; as it thereby draws a more general attention, and leaves a more serious and lasting impression on the mind. The present Author

may therefore hope, that he is not forgetting either the character or the duty of a Clergyman, while he represents this affecting portion of the sacred Narrative in the habit of the Drama. No passage of history, whether sacred or profane, can offer larger scope for the conflict of duty and affection. To exhibit and illustrate such a conflict is the more peculiar province of the Dramatic Muse,

In the conduct of a Drama, which is totally precluded by the sacredness of the subject from theatrical representation, an Author may indulge himself in adopting what model he may fancy most convenient for his purpose. When any moral or religious maxim is to be inculcated or enforced, the plan of the Ancients offers great advantages. The Grecian Tragedy from its first institution was closely connected with the national Creed; and the Chorus, which forms its leading feature, was peculiarly adapted to the solemnities of Religion. The modern efforts of some distinguished Masters in this branch of Poetry are sufficient proofs, that this dramatic model may be successfully applied to systems of Religion very different
from

from the Grecian. And the united authorities of Milton, Racine, and Mafon have given a sanction to such an application in general, as well as to different latitudes of imitation.

In the present little work the forms of the Grecian model are not minutely followed. The imitation extends no further than to the leading outline. Of the three choral songs that form the lyric parts of the Poem, the first is an introduction, the last an inference or application; the one may be considered as the Prologue, the other as the Epilogue: The second, which appears in the body of the work, contributes to the progress of the Drama.

On account of the restraints, that are essential to a regular Tragedy, Dramatic Authors assume, and are allowed, a licence to bend the truth of history to the convenience of their fable. The Grecian model, being more closely limited in its conduct, solicits a still greater degree of indulgence. To a Drama borrowed from the Sacred History this indulgence may not be so freely granted. And in a story, that is familiar to every class of Readers, a slight
vari-

variation in minuter circumstances may not readily be overlooked. It may therefore be doubted, whether too great a licence is not assumed, in representing this most solemn act of obedience as undertaken in the presence of a Chorus; when it appears from the sacred Penman, that the whole transaction passed in secret, and that the Patriarch had purposely withdrawn from the observation of his household. But this objection occurs too late. If it be too great a licence, it admits not of correction on the present model.

The Author must not close his preface, without expressing his obligation to a morsel of pathetic eloquence, intitled, "The Soliloquy of Abraham," as it appears in some miscellaneous collections, and is attributed to Sir Henry Wootton. To other Writers on the subject, whether in an Epic or a Dramatic form, he is not indebted. Some of the sentiments in the lyric portions he is doubtful whether to derive from invention or recollection. Where he has discovered that they occur in some of our religious Writers, he has not been anxious to reject them. And texts of
Scrip-

Scripture, being equally embellishment to the Sermon and the Sacred Drama, he has rather sought than rejected.

Conscious of incorrectness, which he fails in skill to remedy, and occupied by duties, which admit of little leisure for the business of composition or correction, he shrinks from the general eye of the Public. In a partial and limited publication he intrudes with respect and diffidence on the notice of a candid Neighbourhood.

THE
TRIAL OF ABRAHAM,
A DRAMATIC POEM.

CHORUS
OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF ABRAHAM.

SEMICHORUS.

HERE pause our toils; the work is now complete:
And we have leisure, till our Master's coming,
For contemplation on the fields around us.
Well they deserve regard: If any scene
Demands the homage of peculiar awe,
And seems adapted most for solemn rites
And holy deeds, this mountain fure, my Brethren,
Merits that sacred choice; for Nature here
Wears every feature that may please or raise
The human mind, sublime or beautiful:
Whether the circling heights attract our eyes,
Skirted with cedar groves that tower to Heaven;
Whether we look below, where yonder stream,
Shaded with planes and palms, in hoar cascades
Here gushes down the craggy precipice,

B

And

And there in milder state a level mirror
 Diffuses plenty thro' the flowery plain.
 Far as mine eye can reach, the blended scene
 Presents a vestige of divinity,
 And seems a temple where the Sire of all
 Might deign to visit man.

S E M I C H O R U S.

And well, my Brother,
 If I may dare to read celestial counsels,
 Doth the great Father of mankind ordain
 His faithful Servant Abraham to offer
 On such a scene the ritual sacrifice.
 For while such splendid images of nature
 Present themselves on every side before him,
 His mind devoutly tuned to pious homage
 Must rise in fervor to the God of nature,
 Who bade yon' sun to shine, these mountains rise,
 Those cedars tower to Heaven, and yonder stream
 To scatter plenty through the palmy vale.
 Not for himself this scene of holy rites
 Hath God selected, but for Abraham.

S E M I C H O R U S.

Thy words are just; for every place is equal
 To high Jehovah: Every scene alike
 Hath his attention, from whose hands arose
 The peopled city and the wilderness;
 The hill, the vale, the land, and ocean waste.

SEMI-

S E M I C H O R U S.

Yet why, my Brethren, doth our Master tarry?
 On all occasions he was wont to chuse
 The early moments of the rising sun
 To offer sacrifice: And sure the morn
 Befits the purpose of devotion best;
 For then the human soul may best ascend
 In meditation calm and pure, and meet
 For high communion with the band of Spirits.

S E M I C H O R U S.

On yonder brow behold the Friend of Heaven
 Appears in sight: His hand supports a censer
 Fill'd with the hallow'd fire: And from his arm
 Depends a robe of white. His only Son,
 As I conjecture, is not far behind ---
 Slow is his pace, and from his solemn port
 Methinks he muses on celestial themes.
 Behold the altar is already founded;
 The fire approaches; and I trust our Master
 Hath not neglected to provide a victim.
 Begin we now the lofty rite with music;
 And by that anthem, which the Friend of God
 Hath often hallow'd by religious usage,
 Implore the attention of immortal Minds.

C H O R U S.

C H O R A L S O N G.

Awake, my Soul, to themes of praise:
 My Tongue, the hallow'd anthem raise:

While robed in all the grace of morn,
 And blest with all the bloom of spring,
 As fresh to life and lustre born,
 The form of Nature shines reveal'd,
 And all her children seem to yield
 A strain of homage to creation's King.

My Brethren, rise to holy mirth;
 --- Combine your voices with the pious throng
 Of honour'd Fathers now withdrawn from earth;
 Whose better parts, from low-born passions wean'd
 And all those cares that human life annoy,
 In heavenly synod now convened
 The beatific scene enjoy,
 And mix with Angels in immortal song.

Ascend in strains of praise
 To noblest union with the heavenly Choir;
 Who, long before creation's form was drawn,
 Or yon' bright prince of day began to dawn,
 When God alone conceived the fair design
 Now full display'd in nature's ample scene,
 Before the general Sire
 Floated ministrant; yet, afraid to gaze
 Upon the effulgence of the burning shrine,
 Uprear'd their trembling wings, to screen
 Even from immortal eyes the piercing blaze.

The sovereign Father spoke:
 His word was dawning Nature's law:

And,

And, while with blended joy and awe
 His Bands the scene of wonder saw,
 A new Creation into being broke
 Amid the interminable void.

They heard the music of the wheeling spheres
 Not yet conceived by human ears;
 And smit with boundless bliss

At once their songs in unison employ'd;
 At once their living lyres awoke,
 And rapture kindled o'er the vast abyfs.

Whate'er the mighty Founder's care
 Had plann'd, was all sublime and fair;
 And well had heavenly Natures cause,
 Whatever portion of the new expanse
 Above, below, might catch their vifual glance,
 In fongs of triumph to exprefs applaufe.
 Whether their vifion first was drawn on high,
 The roof of nature's ample fane to view,
 The blue pavilions of the fpangly fky;
 With thofe fair heralds of creation's ftory,
 The Sun, the Moon, that ruled by certain laws
 In maze harmonious never tired purfue
 Their paths above, and over night and day
 In pleafing difference hold alternate fway,
 Shedding by turns a lefs or greater glory.
 Whether their eyes delighted now to trace
 The milder beauties of this lower fcene,
 Here amply zoned with Ocean's clear profound,

And

And there array'd in all the pomp of green
 And verdure's primal grace :
 Varied by craggy cliffs, by towering mountains,
 By the deep foliage and the shade of trees,
 By rivers winding from their natal fountains
 Through hills and vales to reach their parent seas,
 Diffusing plenty round.

Nor did the Sire of all in vain
 This goodly mansion found.
 Soon was this young creation stored
 With living creatures, an unnumber'd train,
 Brought into being by his plastic word,
 In water, earth, and air to dwell,
 And each to know its own determined bound.
 With fishes passing human lore to tell
 Their various orders teems the vast profound ;
 In beasts abounds the spacious earth ;
 And through the groves the fowls of air
 Combine in notes of grateful mirth
 To render sweet a world already fair.

But Man alone at that creative hour
 Rose in the model of the King divine,
 Endued with reason and an eye supine
 Beyond this lower world to soar,
 And claim communion with the primal Power,
 Whose hallow'd image on his mind he bore.

The

The Priest of Nature he,
 Placed in the temple of this lower clime,
 In all creation's name to raise
 The grateful incense of terrestrial praise,
 And back in homage yield from time to time
 An humble portion of those blessings vast,
 Which Nature's Author with a hand so free
 Diffuses daily for the world's repast.

Fraught with a spark of that celestial fire,
 Which he is conscious never can grow cold,
 In the pure presence of his heavenly Sire,
 From whom he draws his more immediate birth,
 He hopes eternal days to dwell,
 And face to face his God behold,
 Although the fabric of this mortal shell,
 Decays and moulders into pristine earth.

O Abraham! favour'd over all mankind;
 Even in the veil of mortal mold
 Admitted face to face to hold
 Sublime communion with the sovereign Mind;
 For whose selected line
 Unerring promise noblest fates hath seal'd,
 Approach with awe the appointed shrine,
 And the first fruits of heavenly bounty yield.

CHORUS.

CHORUS. ABRAHAM.

SEMICHORUS.

Hail, Friend and Father, the beloved of Heaven!
 This scene appointed for religious duties
 Beseems a godly choice; and lo! this morn,
 As if selected by divine indulgence,
 Is most auspicious to thy pious purpose.
 Behold thy Servants have completed all,
 In preparation of the custom'd rite,
 As thou didst order, when we left thy tent.
 Behold an altar is provided for thee,
 Built by our hands: And eager too to share
 Each holy service with the Friend of God,
 We have already dared with lips profane
 To call on Powers above, and sing that anthem
 Which pious duty taught thee first to raise
 On such occasions to the sovereign Presence.
 If we may yet presume to aid thee further
 In this high task, nor God rejects our service,
 With joy and grateful reverence we partake
 The willing duty.

ABRAHAM.

Ye are kind and faithful.

SEMICHORUS.

The wood is wanting; shall we go prepare it,
 While the pure censer that thy hand supports
 Yet feeds the flame? But something else remains

Not

Not yet provided: Say, approved of Heaven,
 Where is the victim that thou hast to yield
 Upon this altar?---Ha! what means that sigh,
 That seems to breathe a more than vulgar woe.
 Can one so compass'd by the care of God
 Partake of sorrow?---Yet the sudden gloom
 That overspreads thy brow betrays a mind
 Conscious of latent woes, unlike the rapture
 That wont to kindle in thine aged eyes,
 When God demanded an oblation from thee.---

S E M I C H O R U S.

What means, my Brethren, this mysterious woe?
 This awful silence?---Sure I saw a tear,
 Which he endeavour'd to conceal, but could not.
 When old age weeps, what human soul that knows
 The force of pity can forbear to grieve!
 For sure the sorrows of the hoary hair
 Must hold preeminence o'er other sorrows.---
 Lo! now he tries to speak; but sighs prevent
 All power of language:---Now no longer able
 To check his mourning, he dissolves in tears.---

S E M I C H O R U S.

O Abraham! if thou hast truly found us
 The faithful partners of thy pilgrimages,
 Or thy sojournings in a foreign land,
 Among Barbarians who deny thy God,
 And pay to idols and inanities.

That homage that is due to him alone;
 O tell thy servants the mysterious cause
 Of thine afflictions : We may haply yield
 Some consolation to thy ruffled soul.
 The herbs, that nature freely scatters o'er
 The face of earth, abound in hidden virtues
 To heal the body's wounds; but when the mind
 Becomes diseased, what medicinal charm
 Can better solace than the voice of friendship!

A B R A H A M.

Friendly and faithful I have always found you :
 Nor need I tell you, for ye know how well
 I prize your friendship and fidelity:
 But ah, my Friends! your soothing words were now
 Employ'd in vain: Ye cannot give me solace.
 At this tremendous hour my soul sustains
 A weight of anguish, such as ne'er befel
 Myself or Fathers, of so deep a dye,
 As none of Adam's race I dare to deem
 Before experienced. Every scene around me
 Gives to my wounded heart a keener pang.
 This censer fill'd with fire, this vest, this altar,
 Increase my grief; nay, could ye think it, Brethren?
 Your friendly presence but augments my pain.

C H O R U S.

We grieve to hear so strange a phrase from thee!
 Yet though our friendly cares may nought avail,

Thou

Thou hast a Friend, before whose blisful presence
 All sorrow ceases, who can heal despair.
 O turn thine eyes above, to him who deigns
 On earth to commune face to face with thee,
 And stiles thee only of the Sons of Men
 By that peculiar name, " The Friend of God."

A B R A H A M.

O Brethren, once in happier days he deign'd
 By that high title to distinguish me
 Above all mortal Men : And then I found
 A secret rapture in communion with him
 Beyond the power of speech. Alas ! my Friends,
 That sacred source of consolation fails me,
 That once I fancied inexhaustible.
 Should I appeal to him, so often proved
 My final refuge in affliction's hour,
 To my disorder'd mind he now appears
 No more invested in a form benign,
 The God of mercies and benevolence ;
 But robed in terrors as the Lord of vengeance.--
 Yet what does Abraham presume to say ?
 I still with reverence will regard my God,
 Nor will I vent a murmur to disprove
 That gracious name the great Jehovah gave me.
 Although the duties he enjoins be painful,
 To his supreme behest I wholly yield
 My full obedience both of heart and hand,
 Nor will I pay my God a partial service.

C H O R U S.

Nay now thine anguish must be great indeed,
 And terrible the cause. But yet we think
 To keep within thy soul the fatal secret
 Must tend to foster, not abate thy woes.

A B R A H A M.

Most vain and fruitless were the endeavour, Brethren,
 To hide it from you, since this very scene
 Must soon determine what I dread to think of;
 And I have need of every friendly voice
 To yield me solace, though I greatly doubt
 Its healing virtue.---Yonder turn your eyes!
 Behold my Son,---mine only Son,---the best
 And dearest gift of God,---the fairest pledge
 Of heavenly favour,---of mine age the pride,---
 The boast,---the pillar of my latter days!
 Unhappy Boy! with chearful zeal he bears
 His share of labour in the solemn service:
 Willing he bends beneath the load of wood,
 That speedily must blaze upon this altar.
 Alas! he little dreams how dear a victim
 Must soon resign its precious life thereon.

C H O R U S.

What dreadful tidings are we doom'd to hear!--
 Thy words, thy gestures wake a strange alarm,
 Portending much.---Can ill befall thy Boy,
 Whose birth, ordain'd beyond the course of nature,
 And

And by the voice of God announced unto thee,
 Gave specious omen of transcending fortune?
 His future weal, we cannot sure mistake
 Celestial counsel, seems to win the care
 And special favour of indulgent Heaven.
 Was he not born, beyond all human hope
 Or course of nature, in thy hundredth year,
 A pledge peculiar of that gracious mandate,
 That Nations numerous as the stars of Heaven
 Should draw their boasted origin from thee
 Their grand Forefather? Is he not the Son,
 In whom the Tribes of all the peopled World
 On thine account are preordain'd to blessing?

A B R A H A M.

So was I told by nature's boundless Lord,
 Who from the race of men selected me
 To fear his holy name, and keep alive
 The drooping embers of religious homage
 Amidst a World depraved. At various times
 And various places hath his presence blest me:
 Whether by dewy morn, by sultry noon,
 By cooling evening, or by solemn midnight,
 Hath he, disrobed of that superior lustre,
 That gilds his throne among the Saints above,
 In milder glory veil'd appear'd unto me,
 On some high mountain, under spreading palm,
 Or by some limpid well. Whene'er he deign'd
 To shine upon me with abated brightness,

He

He gave me certain hope, though nature's course
 Forbade all hope, of this predestined Boy;
 From whom should Nations vast and great be born;
 Through whom should saving Grace and Peace divine
 Descend on earth, and all the World be blessed.

Yet, O my Brethren, this predicted Child,
 This Heir of promise, whom I hoped to cheer
 Mine eve of life, and soothe my dying hour,
 That God who gave him bids me now restore---
 Yes, on this altar bids a Father's hand
 Restore him---(ye have cause indeed, my Friends,
 To wear this visage of surprize and horror)---
 A Burnt-Oblation---

C H O R U S.

Most mysterious Heaven!
 What hast thou said? Thine only Son---thine Isaac
 A Burnt-Oblation!---And a Father's hands
 To execute the deed!---The tale thou tellest
 Abounds in horror!---Could thy God enjoin it?

A B R A H A M.

He hath, my Brethren: That benignant Being,
 Who made me prosper in a foreign land;
 Who face to face hath holden converse with me,
 And oft renew'd the signal promises
 Of grace and glory both to me and mine.

Three

Three days are nearly past, since I received
The stern command.--

C H O R U S.

And hast thou kept so long
The fatal secret?

A B R A H A M.

I have kept it, Brethren.
How it has rankled in my wounded heart,
Ye well may deem. Hear every circumstance,
And doubt no more. As near my tent I sat,
Under the palm that overshades the brook,
Amid the heat of noon, and ponder'd long,
In pious musings rapt, the mass of bounties,
That my Creator on myself had shed,
And all the blessings, that on mine account
Were given in liberal promise to my Seed,
The special presence of the Deity
Appear'd before me, by a cloudy pillar
Shrouded from mortal eyes, that cannot bear
The vast effulgence of celestial glory.
Forth from the pillar broke the voice divine
And called on Abraham: I straight replied,
" Behold me here!" Again the voice began
In tone of thunder dire: " Take now thy Son,"
(The word still tingles in my wounded ear)
" Thine only Son, thy best beloved, thine Isaac,
" And the third morning on Moriah's mountain

" A

" A Burnt-Oblation on my hallow'd altar
" Restore the precious loan."

C H O R U S.

What can we say,
Or dare conjecture?---Could the Fancy frame
A strange illusion, and present for true
Some shade of fiction, some deceitful dream
To his bewilder'd eye?---Can we believe
The God of mercies could command a task
Of so much horror?---

A B R A H A M.

Talk not thus, my Brethren.
'Twas no illusion of the wilder'd eye
Foster'd by Fancy, such as fills the brain
When nature slumbers, in the dead of night.
It was my God who gave the dire command;
Nor will I once dispute his voice or doubt it.

C H O R U S.

And wilt thou do the deed?---

A B R A H A M.

Can I debate?
When have I disobey'd the voice of God?

C H O R U S.

Then dost thou well approve thy title given:
Thou art indeed the Father of the Faithful.

ABRA-

ABRAHAM,

O Friends, how painful is the Task assign'd
I need not say: The stroke the Son must feel
Will cost the Sire a still severer pang,
And he that gives the wound will suffer more
Than he that takes it.--Peace, my rising Soul!
Can I expect the glorious prize of Faith
Without the test?--But sure this test is dreadful.--
Yet let me not repine: My God would prove
As meet my virtue first, and then reward it.

CHORUS.

Behold the hallow'd Sacrifice approaches!--

ABRAHAM,

What said ye, Brethren?--

CHORUS.

Lo the precious Victim
Is near at hand!

ABRAHAM,

Support me, God of mercies,
In this tremendous hour!

CHORUS.

O lovely Boy,
We cherish'd hopes of better fortune for thee,
For surely never Child gave better earnest
Of worthy manhood.--

D

ABRA-

(18)

ABRAHAM.

If ye love me, peace!

Wake not the feelings of a Parent in me.
My Soul hath need of vigour far beyond
What I can boast: Compassion ill accords
With this dread scene: I must not hear of pity.
If ye would aid me, brace my soul with courage,
And teach your friend a lesson truly noble,
What reason pleads, tho' nature shrinks to hear,
That human bonds must yield to bonds divine.

CHORUS. ABRAHAM. ISAAC.

ISAAC.

Father, the burden that I bear is great :
O take it from me, ere I sink beneath it.
Good morrow, Friends! the season suits our purpose.
I shall regard our sacrifice the better,
When ye my Brethren are partakers in it.
But where, my Father, is the chosen victim?
Behold the wood, behold the fire is ready!
Yet neither lamb nor kid I see provided
For thine intended sacrifice.

ABRAHAM.

My Son,
God will provide himself a proper victim.

ISAAC.

I doubt it not; but let it ne'er be said,

We

We gave an offering that had cost us nothing.
Say only thou the word, and I will go
With speed to purchase from the neighbouring fold
Some spotless victim meet for thee to offer.

A B R A H A M.

O Brethren, now indeed I am a mourner!

C H O R U S.

Thou art indeed.

I S A A C.

What mean these tears, my Father?
It ill becomes a man of years to weep.
O tell me whose injurious word or deed
Hath wrung these drops of anguish from thine eyes;
And I will bend my bow, and point mine arrows,
To do thee justice on thine enemies.

A B R A H A M.

My Son!—my best beloved!—mine only Child!—
Thou art the cause of my transcending sorrows.
This morn thy God and mine demands, of me
An awful task, of thee an awful trial.
Then mark my speech, and ponder well my words.
Thou know'st what gratitude I owe to God,
Who by indulgent and peculiar favour
Hath from the race of Men selected me,
And holden as a Friend communion with me.

For such high favours, through a length of years
 Beyond the date of man, conferr'd upon me,
 What precious offering wouldst thou have me yield
 To mark my thanks?—What wouldst thou yield
 for me?

I S A A C.

I would not, Father, e'er be thought ungrateful;
 Nor, if I truly know my soul aright,
 Would I be frugal in my gratitude.
 If all the riches that thy love could yield me
 Might prove an argument of filial duty,
 All these I gladly would resign unto him,
 And freely stooping down to poverty
 Would trust his providence that feeds the sparrow
 For every future boon.

A B R A H A M.

Thy words become
 The first-born in the household of the Faithful.
 And yet, my Son, I know a purer test
 Of zeal and gratitude. There yet remains
 One precious offering, that would more express
 That filial duty than a thousand flocks,
 Or the whole produce of ten thousand harvests.

I S A A C.

What more, my Father, could I yield unto him,
 Unless my life, if that might aught avail

To

To prove the fervor of my gratitude?
Yet that I freely would surrender to him,
If God required it:

A B R A H A M.

Blest be thou, my Son,
For that most pious word! It well becomes thee.
And now 'tis thine to give that glorious token.

I S A A C.

My Father!

A B R A H A M.

Yes, my Son, this precious offering
The Sire of nature now requires.

I S A A C.

My Father!

A B R A H A M.

My Son, my Son, with tears that never flow'd
In such a cause from tender parent's eyes,
I speak the purpose of eternal wisdom.
The general Father, who for special reasons
In bounty lent thee as a blessing to me,
Hath now required me to restore the loan.

I S A A C.

And must I leave thee?—Must we part, my Father?

ABRA.

A B R A H A M.

Yes thou must leave me;---we must part, my Son---
Thou little know'st how much I grieve to yield thee;
But yet the means, that I am bound to use
For that surrender, wring my soul indeed;
And I have scarce the power to tell them to thee;
But duty prompts, and I must not be silent.---

This censer fill'd with fire, this wood, this altar---

I S A A C.

--- Are all prepared for sacrifice, my Father.

A B R A H A M.

--- Are all prepared for thee.

I S A A C.

If, God requires
So young a Servant, I obey him gladly.
'Tis mine ambition to attend his altar,
Although the priesthood ill befits my years.
Is this the vesture, this the hallow'd ephod
That I must wear?---'Tis all of spotless white.---
I doubt not, Brethren, it will well become me.

A B R A H A M.

Indeed, mine Isaac, 'tis a hallow'd vesture:
Yet not intended for the Priest that offers,
But for the Sacrifice.

ISAAC.

I S A A C.

O Father, Father!

What strange conjectures rise within my soul!
Thy words,---thy looks,---thy tears,---do all presage
Some dreadful purpose that alarms me greatly.
Then tell me all: I sure can better bear
The real truth, however strange and dreadful,
Than doubts of horror.---Briefly tell me all.

A B R A H A M.

Then hear the whole, my Son. This very morn
Upon this altar God himself hath bid me
Surrender to him back in sacrifice
The best of blessings he hath ever lent me.

I S A A C.

The best of blessings!--Dost thou mean thine Isaac?
For so thou oft in happiest hours hast call'd me.---
Am I the sacrifice?

A B R A H A M.

Thou art indeed.

I S A A C.

Ye Thrones of mercy! can a Parent use
A strain so dreadful to his only Child?---
Where am I, Brethren?---What tremendous dream
Arrests my senses?---Am I well awake?---
And doth yon' glorious Sun illumine the day?---

Say

Say was it Abraham?—Could it be my Father
 That utter'd words of such alarming horror?—
 O Friends and Brethren, if the scene be real,
 And no illusion of the wilder'd brain,
 O shield me from the presence of my Father!

C H O R U S.

Alas! we must not, nay we cannot aid thee.
 Even now thy Father suffers more for thee
 Than ever Father felt: Even at this hour
 While he prepares to execute a deed,
 So much unfitting for a Parent's hand
 In human eyes, his heart is bleeding for thee.
 But God himself hath given this ordinance;
 And firm is Abraham when God commands it;
 Who, though thy Father, is the Friend of God.

I S A A C.

O wretched Isaac, now thou art an Orphan,
 Without a Guardian and without a Friend!
 For they, who lately gave me looks of kindness,
 Are now grown strangers; he, who call'd me late
 His darling Child, now threatens to spill my blood.
 Yet, O my God, though mortal Friends forget me,
 I cannot fail to have a Friend in thee.
 O thou, that seated on the shrine of mercy
 Survey'st the world, I make appeal to thee!
 Thou sure wilt ne'er permit a Father's hand
 To work a deed so dire. O hear and save!

ABRA-

A B R A H A M.

My Son, if God had not ordain'd the sentence,
 These tears, that now mine aged eyes o'erwhelm,
 Had ne'er been shed. O trust me, lovely Boy,
 To save each hair of thy dear head from falling,
 I would surrender drops of vital blood.
 But no affection, no parental bond
 Shall make me deviate from a nobler duty;
 Nor will I ever disobey my God,
 Who lent thee to me when I least expected,
 And bids me now restore the precious loan.

O would to Heaven that I might die for thee!
 Would God admit it, that indeed were mercy.
 But shall the Sons of earth presume to dictate
 To sovereign Wisdom what is fit and meet?
 Whate'er he wills is right; and 'tis my duty,
 However painful both to thee and me,
 To execute the deed without a murmur.

Yet O for that celestial eloquence,
 That flows persuasive from the lips of Angels,
 To reconcile thee to the doom design'd!
 I then might look upon the intended deed
 With less reluctance and abated horror;
 Might even rejoice to yield thee back an offering
 Supremely welcome in thy Maker's eyes;
 Who sure, beyond the present scene of care,
 Hath other treasures of transcending bliss.

Unknown to mortal thought, in store for those,
Who prove their faith in every fiery trial;
Nor with reluctance yield their precious spirits
Up to the general Sire when he demands them.

C H O R U S.

Another trial, Abraham, approaches:
Behold thy Sarah, whom thou least intendedst
To be spectatress of this awful rite,
Is now advancing up the mountain's brow,
With much disorder'd mien and hurried pace
Not well according with her length of years;
As if some Power had given her secret boding
Of this mysterious and uncommon service.

A B R A H A M.

Unhappy me, ordain'd to undergo
New trials, to accomplish labours more severe!

CHORUS. ABRAHAM. ISAAC. SARAH.

I S A A C.

O sent by Mercy to thy suffering Child
Dear Mother welcome!--Do not slack thy pace,
But fly to aid me, to support, and save.--
O guard me, guard me from a Father's presence!

S A R A H.

What means my Son? My soul is full of boding:--
I joy to meet thee;--yet thy wilder'd eye

And

And much disorder'd mien but ill presage
A welcome meeting.---From thy Father saist thou?

I S A A C.

O yes; he tells me I am doom'd to die,
And these my Brethren all declare the same.
Yet if I still have found thee kind and tender,
My dearer Parent, if I still have striven
To merit all thy tenderness, I hope
Thy steps are hither drawn to shield from harm
Thy hapless Orphan.

S A R A H.

What mysterious woe
My throbbing heart forebodes!---My Lord, my
Master!

That solemn gloom that overclouds thy brow
Presages something that I dare not ask thee.
O look with less severity upon me,
And ease my soul of these uncertain bodings!

A B R A H A M.

Indeed thou never wast less welcome, Sarah.
Say what has moved thee to forego thy home,
And thus to seek me over hill and vale,
With toil that ill befits thy sex and years,
So long and weary a way?

(28)

S A R A H.

O strange to tell!

Prodigious causes! Ever since ye left me,
Have frightful visions discomposed my slumber,
And given me dreadful and alarming bodings
For my dear Isaac.---Couldst thou think it, Abraham?
Thrice have I dreamt, that thy parental hand
Plunged in the bosom of thine only Son
A fatal ponyard,---while the Host of Angels
Form'd an effulgent zone of glory round thee:
Some with complacence view'd the dreadful deed;
But others testified transcendent horror
With eyes averted from the scene: For me,
I struggled also to avert mine eyes,
But firm as marble they were fix'd upon it:
For all the treasures that Damascus holds,
For all the regions by celestial promise
Predestined to thy Seed, I would not dream
The like again.

I S A A C.

O all is verified!--

A B R A H A M.

My Son, my Son, forbear!

S A R A H.

And though I knew
Thy kind, thy tender, thy parental heart

Could

Could never harbour such a dreadful purpose,
 Believe me, Abraham, it has greatly moved me:
 Nor could I pause, or lay me down to slumber,
 Till I had found you here. And lo this meeting
 Contributes nothing to assuage my doubts,
 Where every circumstance gives mystic omen
 Of some portentous rite or dismal deed,
 Beyond my fancy to conjecture what.

A B R A H A M.

A more convenient hour must solve the doubts
 That now disturb thy soul. Be patient, Sarah;
 And trust to God in all thy cares and sorrows.
 The eternal Father now demands my service:
 No human care must interrupt the duty.
 Retire, until the sacrifice be past;
 I then will strive to give thee every solace.

S A R A H.

Yet say, my Husband---

A B R A H A M.

By the mutual loves,
 That have subsisted seventy years between us
 Without impairment from revolving time,
 Forbear! The service that my God enjoins
 Precedence claims above all human duties.

SARAH.

S A R A H.

How canst thou talk of mutual loves between us,
 When thou behold'st me tortured thus with fears,
 The more alarming from the doubts that cloud them,
 And yet refus'st thy compassion to me?

A B R A H A M.

O Sarah, strive not to unbend my soul!
 Disturb not thus my pious fortitude,
 Nor make me prove unworthy of the name
 And glorious title that my God hath given me,
 And those vast blessings he hath freely pour'd
 On my selected head. I must not now
 Remain a witness of thy prayers and tears.
 Retire, my Sarah: This religious hour
 Is due to heaven, and God admits not thee
 At this high rite to make intrusion here.
 Support her, Eleazar, from my presence,
 And strive awhile to be her comforter,
 Till I have leisure to assume the task.

I S A A C.

O take me also, Eleazar, hence!
 I dare not stay behind.--O hear my voice!
 My Father threatens on this fatal altar
 To spill my blood.--Thou seest in me thine Isaac
 The precious Lamb design'd for sacrifice.
 But wilt thou suffer such a deed, my Mother?--

O shew

O shew that pity that my Sire refuses,
And take me with thee.

S A R A H.

Ha! What said mine Isaac?---
Make thee a sacrifice!--O tell me, tell me,
Thou chosen Man of God, what means my Son?---
Why art thou silent?---Why with folded arms
And eyes intent on that ill boding altar
Thus dost thou hold a mien and attitude
Of such most desperate and stubborn firmness?---
Still art thou silent to my prayers?---O Brethren,
I hope ye also do not want compassion:
If ye regard with sympathizing pity
The frantic sorrows of a tender Mother,
O straight relieve me from these doubts of horror!

C H O R U S.

We can no longer hide it from thee, Sarah;
Yet do not hate us till the close of time
For the dire tidings that thou bidst us utter.
The God of Abraham asks no vulgar victim;
To prove the fervor of the faith he holds,
He bids him yield his dear and only Son
Upon this altar an immediate offering:
And lo the pious Man, in faith approved,
Prepares obedience to the heavenly mandate.

SARAH.

S A R A H.

When will these dreadful dreams forbear to rack
 A Mother's brain; for sure they are but dreams,
 Although they bear the deepest hues of horror.
 For how can Sarah entertain belief,
 That one renown'd for every pious duty,
 In all relations human and divine
 Approved by all, would e'er his hands embrue
 In filial blood; or that the God of mercies,
 The Friend of Abraham, could e'er enjoin it.
 Yet, O my Husband, if thou ever hadst
 Affection for me, as I still have fancied;
 Dispel my doubts; dissolve this dream of woe,
 This wild illusion that alarms my soul.

A B R A H A M.

Would I might give thee words of comfort, Sarah!
 But this is truly the command of Heaven;
 And that command I never yet disputed.
 My faith has been intire, as God hath witness'd;
 And mine obedience been accepted by him.

S A R A H.

And dost thou then design to execute
 This dire injunction?

A B R A H A M.

'Tis my final purpose.

SARAH.

S A R A H.

Then, wretched Sarah, go and weep for ever!
 Beyond the grief of mortal women wretched!
 O fatal Husband, vainly call'd the Faithful,
 In vain selected for thy piety!
 Thou sure hast never loved thy Son or me:
 Else couldst thou never think of such a deed,
 As must thy Sarah make disconsolate,
 And cause a Mother's tears to flow for ever.

A B R A H A M.

A life of love and tenderness unequal'd
 Among the present race doth sure deserve
 A milder speech; but I forgive thy transports:
 From what he feels himself a tender Sire
 May well conjecture what a Mother feels:
 And what thou saist in such ungentle phrase
 Proceeds from lips by maddening passion prompted,
 And merit pity more than blame. Yet, Sarah,
 Thy words oppress me;—let me hear no more.
 A Father bound on so severe a purpose
 Can brook no censure, though a Mother speak it.
 Then leave me, Sarah; I conjure thee leave me.
 I cannot now support thy company.

I S A A C.

O Mother go, and let me go with thee;
 For now, my Father's darken'd brow alarms me.
 With joy I clung of late around his knees:

F

But

But now his presence makes me shrink with fear.
 O let us instant leave this fatal place;
 For all is horror here and strange alarm,
 Save thou my Mother.

S A R A H.

O my precious Child!
 If aught my pleadings or my tears avail,
 No hair of thy devoted head shall perish.

My Lord! my Master! hear a Mother plead
 For the dear welfare of an only Child.
 Sure never Father would refuse attention
 To such a cause unless his heart was marble.
 Say could it truly be the voice of God
 That gave the stern decree? Or hath not rather
 Some strange impression of the night beguiled
 Thy rambling brain, and to thy fancy's eye
 Pourtray'd in hues of truth an airy vision?

A B R A H A M.

Beyond all doubt it was the voice of God,
 That gave this mandate, at the noon of day,
 When pass'd the Sun in undiminish'd brightness;
 When my whole senses were awake and clear,
 And fancy could not stray. Full well I know
 The voice of God; through a long date of time
 By frequent converse grown familiar to me.
 When first he call'd me from the dreary gloom

Of

Of moral darkness that involved my Fathers
 Into his saving light; when still he deign'd
 Through all my steps of mortal pilgrimage
 To give me solace and encouragement;
 When he supplied my thriving board with plenty;
 When round my tent he spread his guardian shade
 Among the Heathen in a foreign land,
 And gave protection, gave me conquest o'er them;
 When in my close of life to crown my joys
 This darling Son a precious Heir he sent me;
 Say, Sarah, did I ever fail to own him
 The gracious God of my support and comfort?
 And shall I now dispute or doubt his voice,
 When he requires me to restore a part
 Of those vast blessings he hath freely given.

No, my dear Isaac, though I love thee more
 Than Man conceives, though God alone can tell
 The sovereign value that I place upon thee;
 Wert thou more precious in thy Father's eyes
 A thousand fold, yet would I rouse my spirit,
 And brace the sinews of mine aged arm,
 To render thee in precious martyrdom
 To that eternal Sire from whom I had thee.

S A R A H.

Yet think, O Abraham, how God himself,
 As our Fore-fathers have transmitted to us
 The moral precept which he gave of old,

Denounces vengeance on the head of him
 Who sheds the blood of man. Remember well,
 What ample punishment he pour'd on Cain,
 While yet the world was young, who slew his Brother,
 Smit with enormous fears, and scared with guilt,
 That seem'd engraven with a pen of iron
 On his despondent brow, thereby to prove
 God's keenest wrath on such a mortal trespass.
 And canst thou steep thy hand in filial blood
 Without offending his eternal goodness.
 Remember also, how the same divine
 And gracious Being, when the world revived
 After the general flood, denounced this judgement,
 That " who so sheds the blood of human creature,
 " By human creature shall his blood be shed."

A B R A H A M.

O half believer in divine decrees!
 What poor and specious arguments thou usest
 To veil affections that revolt from duty.
 What surer warrant can thy soul require
 Than sovereign will for each appointed rite?
 And who is meeter to expound his will
 Than God himself? The act of Cain proceeded
 From his own sinful and malicious mind:
 But for that service I am call'd to pay
 My God himself hath given immediate mandate.

SARAH.

S A R A H.

Yet think, my Husband, if thou slay'st thy Son,
 How will that great and golden prophecy
 Announced by Angels be accomplish'd on him,
 Wherein thy Sarah was proclaim'd the Mother
 Of people numerous as the stars of Heaven?
 Did not thy God preface the joyful tidings
 That Kings of Nations should be born from Isaac?
 And that in him and his unnumber'd Seed
 He would establish an eternal treaty?
 If now the date of Isaac's days be closed,
 The glorious promise in the bud is blasted,
 And God's predictions in thy special favour
 Become of none effect.

A B R A H A M.

Sarah, no more!

The same Almighty Power who promised us
 This precious heir, nor did his promise fail,
 When length of days forbade all hope of Children,
 Can still accomplish every purpose pass'd,
 Though we be unable to conjecture how.
 I tell thee Sarah that his word alone
 Even from the stones that now compose this altar
 Can raise up Children unto Abraham.

The glorious prize of faith has been display'd
 To us alone: Wouldst thou maintain it, Sarah,
 Submit with patience to the will of God,

Who

Who surely counsels what is best for man,
 Though, while we wear the veil of mortal mold,
 Our unenlighten'd eyes but ill avail
 To trace the counsels of eternal wisdom.
 Retire, my Spouse, from this tremendous rite,
 And be thou thankful, that the God who gave
 The dread command hath not enjoin'd on thee
 The painful task, nor even required thy presence.
 Retire,---with patience, if thou canst,---and leave
 A Father's hands to do the solemn duty,
 Without a Mother's interrupting groans.

S A R A H.

Remorseless husband!--yet I must obey thee,
 For thy whole mien declares thy cruel firmness.
 Yet ere I leave this fatal place, allow me
 (Thou canst not sure refuse a Mother that)
 To pour upon his dear devoted head
 A few maternal tears.---O hapless Boy!
 Such hopes I lately entertain'd of thee,
 From prophecies that I imagined certain,
 As sure no Mother entertain'd before.
 Alas! they vanish all as airy dreams,
 And I am doom'd to pass my latter days
 In sorrow desperate and remediless.---
 Sweet Boy! those tears---that countenance of anguish
 Make thee more precious in mine eyes than ever.---
 And yet (mysterious Heaven) they cannot melt---
 They cannot move thy Father's cruel firmness.

ISAAC.

I S A A C.

O Mother, sure he wears a sterner mien
 Than e'er I saw before: Thou best of Parents,
 Advance to shield me!—From a Father's frown
 Defend thy Son!

S A R A H.

No, we will never part.—
 This arm shall shield thee from ten thousand foes.—
 Or if thy cruel father be determined
 To aim his fauchion at thy precious life,
 Myself will ward the fatal stroke with mine.

A B R A H A M.

Sarah, this is not well; and what avail
 Thy feeble strugglings with almighty purpose?
 Thy fond intreaties do thine Isaac wrong:
 They discompose his soul, when but for thee
 I might persuade his pious mind to bow
 With resignation to the will of Heaven.
 I must not see thee lingering o'er his neck,
 So long immersed in tears and bow'd with anguish;
 As if ye parted now to meet no more.
 Thou surely dost not doubt a future life,
 And the bright recompence of faith hereafter.—
 Nay, Sarah, now forbear! Those frantic gestures
 Can work no good; they but enhance thine anguish,
 And make thy Son a less accepted boon

In

In his Creator's eyes, who now demands him.
Brethren, conduct her hence.

S A R A H.

O barbarous Man!

But I will make appeal to the eternal Throne
And all the bands of Seraphim for mercy,
That cannot move the heart of Abraham.
Isaac, farewell! farewell, my precious Boy!
Farewell for ever!--No, thou shalt not die:
No, I will summon all the Powers above
To thine assistance.--I will blow the trumpet,
That gathers all the etherial Thrones in arms,
And bring thee rescue with a host of Angels.

A B R A H A M.

Her brain is tortured with excessive anguish.
Go thou, Nathanael, watch my Sarah's steps,
Attend her close, and guard her well from outrage.

N A T H A N A E L.

I freely hasten to obey thy voice.

CHORUS. ABRAHAM. ISAAC.

A B R A H A M.

Lo half the conflict is already past.
Severe it was; yet give me grace, my God,
To bear the rest as well. I now am arm'd
With better courage for the task assign'd.

But,

But, O my precious Child! my best beloved!
 How shall I soothe thy tender soul to patience?
 And how persuade thee to resign thyself
 A willing Martyr? What prevailing language
 Shall mortal use to quell the voice of nature,
 And teach his Son to be content to die?

I S A A C.

And must thou, canst thou slay thy darling Isaac?

A B R A H A M.

I must, my Child; thy God and mine enjoins it;
 And human will must yield to heavenly purpose.
 Yet, O my Son, although thy doom be seal'd,
 Though I be summon'd to accomplish it,
 Yet still retain thy confidence in God;
 Who by the sentence now determin'd on thee,
 Although it wears a mien of horror, shews
 That he regards thee with peculiar notice;
 Who seems to love thee still even while he smites thee.
 Then fear not thou, that like a vulgar offering
 Thou shalt intirely die, or sink for ever
 In blind oblivion; the divine decrees
 Predicted in thy favour cannot fail:
 And haply he, who now ordains thy death,
 May soon restore thee to thy mourning Parents,
 Renew'd to life and all thy former bloom;
 Thereby to accomplish in determin'd time
 The welcome presage, which adorn'd and blest

G

Thy

Thy natal hour, that I should live in thee,
The Sire of Nations great and numberless.

But if mysterious Heaven hath other counsels,
And other methods to fulfil its purpose,
Beyond the narrow ken of mortal eyes;
Let this high creed, to me and mine alone
Of modern men reveal'd, support thy mind
Above all mortal pangs: Thy better part
Beyond the reach of death shall still survive,
Free from the ponyard and sepulchral pyre:
And if thou meet the stroke of death with patience,
God will receive thee to his heart adopted
A darling Child, and thou shalt find in him
A better Father than thou know'st in me.

Assist me, Friends, with your united voices
In this most arduous office of persuasion,
For I am waded with the dreadful conflict.
Use all your rhetoric, I conjure you, Brethren,
To soothe his soul to patient fortitude:
I would not have him curse me as he dies;
And also strive to invigorate my courage.

Myself mean while will lay the wood in order,
And deck the altar for the intended victim.

CHORUS.

CHORAL SONG.

Ye guardian Powers, who round the shrine
Of sovereign mercy glow,

And

And thence attend with eye benign
 The cares of men below!
 O now behold with pity's beam
 The Man, approved by choice supreme,
 And well the Father of the Faithful stiled;
 While he so pure, so vast an offering brings,
 Beyond the boasted hecatombs of Kings,
 His precious only Child,

Confirm his soul, ye Bands of grace,
 In this dread hour of need;
 His aged arm with valour brace
 To work the fated deed:
 No less impart your generous aid
 The tender Victim's mind to still;
 To passive worth his heart persuade,
 And animate the generous will,
 Of holy Faith to yield heroic proof;
 And when uplifted in a Father's hand
 O'er his dear head the fauchion flames aloof,
 To bow with patience to divine command.

O precious Martyr, do not fondly deem,
 That God in anger now requires thy doom:
 Although the high behest severe may seem,
 Yet hence to thee conveyance fleet is given
 From this frail scene to climes of endless bloom,
 From man to God, from earth to Heaven.

Even now the Attendants of the sovereign Throne
 With pleasing wonder view thy pious mind
 To speedy doom at God's decree resign'd :
 Already hovering in the fields of air
 O'er thy devoted head they form a zone ;
 Already clad in snow-white stole
 With harps of healing tone prepare
 The hallow'd anthem for thy fleeting soul.

And, " Welcome, valued Shade!" they sing,
 " To the realms of holy pleasure,
 " Which the pure alone attain,
 " Where the good repose their treasure,
 " Unimpair'd in time or measure ;
 " Welcome to the choral train
 " Of Angels waiting round the heavenly King !
 " Thy trials now are all forborne :
 " Thy pangs of mortal frailty cease :
 " Awake from life's tumultuous dream,
 " And well approved by Love supreme,
 " 'Tis thine to bask in bliss's purer morn,
 " And feel the sun-shine of eternal peace.
 " Expand your wings, ye Choir divine :
 " In light the new-born Saint enshrine :
 " A nobler tone of rapture swell ;
 " And louder strike the living shell.
 " Sublimely throned on angel pinions
 " Thus we bear thee, martyr'd Boy,

" Up

- " Up to Virtue's true dominions,
 " Where thy pious Fathers dwell,
 " And the pure vision of the Blest enjoy,
 " Already conscious of thy soul's release
 " From this corporeal frame,
 " Lo now with eye benign and features mild,
 " Each from his destined seat of endless peace,
 " To meet their sainted Child,
 " Advance the Founders of the Hebrew name,
 " Lo he for virtue singly shewn
 " By God's transcendent favour graced,
 " Of all the Sons of Men alone
 " Forbid the draught of death to taste;
 " Whom from these climes by sorrow fraught
 " Of yore on living wheels of fire
 " Aloof Cherubic legions caught,
 " Lo Father Enoch leads the solemn Choir.
 " Now from the tree of life, that rose of old
 " Under the great primeval Planter's hand,
 " Whose medicinal leaves and fruits of gold
 " To heal the Nations day by day expand
 " In heavenly fields, by that pure Fountain fed,
 " That pours her waves in limpid maze beneath,
 " With willing fingers he entwines a wreath
 " Of endless bloom to grace thine honour'd head.

" Now

" Now from the ambrosial well,
 " Whose crystal water never ceasing flows
 " Forth from the throne of Grace, he deigns to bring
 " Those all refreshing draughts, ordain'd to close
 " Terrestrial care, the pangs of Death to quell,
 " And rob the Tyrant of his final sting.
 " Here, fainted Youth, among the pious Blest
 " Make thine eternal home, a welcome Guest!

" And when thy Parents full of honour'd age
 " And mellow'd virtues, like a sheaf of corn
 " Now ripe for bearing home, in season close
 " Their mortal eyes with care and sorrow worn,
 " And seek in God's appointed time repose
 " From this drear maze of human pilgrimage;
 " Be thine the dear and pious task to greet
 " Their spirits, ransom'd from the bonds of clay,
 " And glad to leave the body's mouldering dome,
 " To the pure sabbath of serener day
 " In yon' ethereal climes their proper home:
 " Where they the general host of Saints may meet,
 " And hold high converse with the holy Train,
 " In all celestial grace to them allied;
 " Who erst for virtues in the body tried
 " In spirit now the vast reward obtain."

I S A A C.

Brethren, the strugglings of my soul are past,
 And ye have conquer'd all the pleas of nature,

Which

Which late endear'd my mortal being to me.
 No more reluctant I am now resign'd
 To God's disposal, as he deems most meet.
 Take me, my Father: on thine altar lay me,
 And yield thy Son a willing sacrifice.
 Patient I bow before thy lifted blade,
 Meek as the Lamb that wont to lick thy hand,
 Even while it grasps the knife to spill its blood.
 For I shall soon obtain a recompence,
 Even from the God who now demands my life:
 Nor shall I fail in his appointed time
 To meet my Parents, then renew'd like me
 To nobler being, though it cost me now
 The greatest pang to leave you both behind:
 And we shall all in other worlds together
 Enjoy eternal bliss.---But do not look
 With so austere a countenance upon me:
 Abate that frown, and then I die contented.

A B R A H A M.

Ten thousand blessings on thy precious spirit!
 The deeds of mighty chiefs renown'd in story
 Are all eclipsed before thy passive virtue.
 Let Heaven and Earth regard this awful hour,
 And give thee just applause! Thou now art meet
 For Men and Angels to behold with wonder.
 To me thou seem'st a sacrifice sufficient
 To make atonement for the sins of Nations.
 O Friends and Brethren, I must learn from him,
Now

Now so courageous to receive the stroke;
The steadfast courage to inflict it on him.
Almighty Ruler, overlook my tears,
And pardon the reluctance of a Parent!

I S A A C.

Nay weep not, Father; now you are too tender:
Those tears you freely shed must aggravate
The pang of parting.

A B R A H A M.

Most Heroic Boy!

I will endeavour to be firm like thee.

The hour predestined for this awful rite
Already speeds: The Sun is high in heaven:
Prepare thee now to die. For thee I chose
This white apparel: Thou must first assume
These proper emblems of thy spotless mind.

I S A A C.

If I must wed with death, assist me, Friends,
('Tis the last Service I can ask of you,
Who still have joy'd to serve me) to assume
My bridal robes, for they are new to me.

C H O R U S.

With trembling hands we make essay to aid thee.

ABRA-

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ABRAHAM.

How lovely, Brethren, they appear upon him!

SEMICHORUS.

He bears the port of some embodied Virtue.

SEMICHORUS.

A white-robed Innocence.

ABRAHAM.

He seems an Angel
Sent from the Courts of light with blessed tidings:

CHORUS.

Even on an errand of salvation bent.

ISAAC.

Completely robed for death I now am ready.

ABRAHAM.

Then I must bind thee.

ISAAC.

Nay, forbear thy hand;
I am resign'd; but do not treat thy Son
As one attainted for dishonest deeds.

ABRAHAM.

My Child, I treat thee like a spotless victim,
Dear in the fight of Heaven.

H

ISAAC.

I S A A C.

Then I submit.

I know my sufferings all are felt by thee :
 I will not aggravate thy present pangs
 By more resistance. Brethren, fare ye well !
 And mark my final words. Be sure to soothe
 My Mother's breast, for she will greatly mourn,
 As one bereft indeed. O thank her much
 For all the kindness she hath shewn to me.
 Be sure to tell her that in death's last pang
 I thought on her with pious love and duty ;
 Buoy'd up o'er all my sufferings with the hope
 To see her blest with me in other worlds,
 Where my dear Father's hand no more shall rise
 To give his best beloved unwilling pain.
 In that pure clime I hope to meet you all.

C H O R U S.

O may we yearn to gain a mansion there !
 Farewell, sweet Boy ! nor doubt thy final wishes
 To us are sacred as a voice from Heaven ;
 For we may deem thee now already there.

I S A A C.

Then, Father, raise thy hand, whene'er thou pleasest.

A B R A H A M.

My Brethren, kneel, and join in prayer with me.

Almigh-

Almighty Parent! who of old createdst,
 Who still controul'st, and as thy wisdom deems
 Expedient, alter'st the fair frame of nature;
 Who wast in former days benignly pleased
 To call me from the moral gloom that veild
 My Father's mansion, to accept my faith
 For active virtue, and in gracious token
 Of that acceptance in my hundredth year
 Gavest me beyond my hopes this precious Heir:
 I will not forfeit thy peculiar favour
 By disobedience and ungrateful dealing.
 Though now thou lay'st thy heavy hand upon me,
 I still believe thee, still acknowledge thee
 The same great Father of the peopled world,
 Full of compassion, tenderness, and mercy.
 Nor do I doubt at all thy power to raise
 Unnumber'd Nations from the parched bones
 And clay cold ashes of my poor devoted:
 That so thy prophecies may be accomplish'd,
 Which cannot err or fail. Yet O forgive
 My hesitations and my long delays:
 I now am ready to fulfil thy pleasure.
 Take from a Father's hand an only Child,
 Of all the riches by thy favour given
 Of most esteem: With my whole heart I yield him;
 I glory in him nobly call'd to die
 Upon thine altar.---

I S A A C.

Turn my head, my Father.

Although my soul is ready wing'd for flight,
 Nor shrinks my bosom at the impending stroke,
 I cannot bear to see a Father's hand
 Uplifted o'er me.

A B R A H A M.

'Tis too much, my Brethren---
 Too great a trial for a tender Parent.
 O God of mercies, look benignly down
 On this dread hour!---Forgive a Father's weakness!---
 My weak old hands are palsied for the deed.
 Refuse not, O my God, to hear the prayer
 My frailty prompts, and let my Friends perform
 This hard injunction in a Father's place.

C H O R U S.

Nay, Abraham, 'tis not meet for us to do it:
 He is not ours; we gave him not a being;
 We have no right by nature over him?
 And God himself hath given us no command.

I S A A C.

If I must die, let me not linger thus
 In dread expectation of the fatal stroke,
 That sets the spirit free from future pain.
 Be firm and speedy in the deed, my Father,
 Or I shall fear to die.

ABRA-

A B R A H A M.

Departing Saint !

More great in suffering, than in acting I !
 My soul, that once I thought so firm and brave
 To every duty by my God enjoin'd,
 Now shrinks within me at the final trial.
 But shall my sinews fail when God commands ?
 O thou eternal source of life and death !
 Who didst endue me with a vital beam,
 Above the flowerets that adorn the field ;
 Who gavest me reason that celestial ray,
 Above the beasts, above the fowls of air,
 To comprehend thee and acknowledge thee
 The Sire of all, confirm my faltering soul,
 Strengthen my sinews, brace my trembling hands
 To work thy pleasure, and let heaven and earth
 Fulfil thy mandates.-----

A N G E L.

Abraham ! Abraham !

A B R A H A M.

God of our Fathers, what majestic voice
 Arrests my hand in this tremendous moment !

C H O R U S.

O 'tis the voice of God already near !---
 The special presence of Jehovah gilds
 That altar, ready from the veiling cloud

To

To break in terrors on our mortal eyes,
O who may bear it?—Who abide his coming?—
Fall prostrate, Brethren—shroud your heads in dust!
We cannot see the form of God, and live.

A N G E L.

Abraham! Abraham!

A B R A H A M.

Behold me here!

A N G E L.

Lay not thy hand upon the Boy to smite him,
Nor do him harm; for now we surely know,
Thou fearest God with faith sincere and active,
Since thou hast not withheld at his demand
Thy Son, thine only Son, thy precious Isaac.

A B R A H A M.

Fountain of every good, I bow before thee
With adoration and with trembling joy!

A N G E L.

Thus saith Jehovah: “ By myself I swear;
“ Because thou hast in this been truly faithful,
“ Nor hast withheld thy Son, thine only Son,
“ By God required; in blessing I will bless thee;
“ In multiplying I will multiply thee;
“ And make thee numerous as the stars above,

“ And

“ And as the sands upon the sea-beat shore,
“ Which none may number for their multitude,
“ Above all Nations shall thy glory thrive,
“ Holding pre-eminence in heavenly grace,
“ And in thy Seed shall all mankind be blessed.”

A B R A H A M.

Amazing change!--I now indeed am crown'd
With favour, and my cup o'erflows with blessings.
My darling Son yet lives, the best of bounties,
By interposal from above redeem'd
From this funereal pyre.

I S A A C.

My heart is full:
I cannot answer as I ought, my Father.
But, O my Brethren, go with speed and find
My weeping Mother. Tell her all the tidings:
Tell her that I yet live to dry her tears,
With filial duty to repay her kindness;
The God of mercies hath determined it--

A B R A H A M.

I have not power of utterance as becomes me.
Brethren, will ye unbind my Son! My hands,
That late were finew'd for a dreadful purpose,
Are palsied now to every gentler duty.

CHO.

C H O R U S.

No task were greater pleasure.—From the grave
 Welcome, dear Boy! thrice welcome to our arms!
 Thy Brethren greet thee with unfeigned rapture.

I S A A C.

Thanks to you all, my Friends: I know ye love me;
 I know ye joy at my deliverance.
 O Father, sure I may approach thee now,
 With fear no longer, but with tender love
 As most becomes a Child. I now may cling
 Around thy neck: I now may kiss that hand,
 That was uplifted late to spill my blood.

A B R A H A M.

O most accepted Child, redeem'd from death,
 As thou wast given, by means miraculous,
 Receive a Sire's embrace, whose hand no more
 Shall rise to hurt thee, who may now indulge
 His vast affection unalloy'd by pain.
 Now, Isaac, I indeed am blest in thee
 O'er all the race of men. This hour transcends
 In cordial rapture that momentous morn,
 Wherein they told me that a Son was given
 In mine old age, the heir of heavenly promise,
 Beyond all human hope.—Kneel we, my Son,
 Before this altar, that I lately view'd
 With horror, now with gratitude and rapture,

And

And yield our thanks to him, whose gracious voice
Hath turn'd our mourning into boundless joy.

Parent of mercies now supremely witness'd,
Who thus hast given, a Father zeal to smite
His best beloved and only Child, a Son
Heroic virtue to receive the stroke
Without a murmur, most benignly pleased
To deem our faith obedience: O accept
Our fervent gratitude, and hear our vows!
To thee I vow continual prayer and praise,
I vow the choice of all those precious things,
Thy bounty freely grants from day to day.
And lo my Son, whose valued life thou late
In justice didst demand; in mercy now
Remitt'st unto me, while he lays his hand
Upon that altar, where he lately thought
To shed his blood in willing martyrdom,
Vows thee a far more meritorious offering,
His life's whole service from his present youth
Until the day, when thou shalt call him home
To the great synod of etherial Souls
Tried on this lower clime and well approved:
Indeed in nothing we can recompence
Our heavenly Father for his boundless goodness.
But God in grace accepts our gratitude,
And purposes as virtue to reward it.

(58)

ABRAHAM. ISAAC. CHORUS. SARAH.

S A R A H.

Where is my Son?--Say, Father of the Faithful,
Must I believe the blissful tidings given--
Or is it all delusion?--Doth he live?--
So Shelah said, who never yet deceived me.
O Brethren, shew me my recover'd Child,
And I will bless you, till the hand of death
For ever seals my tongue.

C H O R U S.

Before that altar,
Mother of Nations, on his knees he pays
His fervent vows of gratitude to Heaven
For his remitted doom.

S A R A H.

My soul be calm!--
It is mine Isaac's form.--On such a mien
I gazed with pleasure once and kindling joy
Beyond a Mother's lot. But racking dreams
Perplex my brain, and airy phantoms now
Assume the port of truth.

I S A A C.

My Mother here!
Sure God already hath repaid my trial.

SARAH.

S A R A H.

He speaks--mine Isaac speaks--he lives to bless
 A Mother's age, and I can doubt no more.--
 O welcome, welcome to a Mother's arms,
 Thou best and dearest of the gifts of Heaven!--
 And did some Minister of grace arrest,
 (For so they say) thy Father's lifted hand?--
 And could thy Father lift his hand to smite
 So dear a Child?--O born by miracle,
 By miracle recover'd from the grave!
 My hopes, my joys at this eventful hour
 Are all complete in thee.

I S A A C.

I thank my God
 For this high trial, if he thus repays it.
 For you, dear Parents, I was lothe to leave
 This mortal state; I joy to live for you.

A B R A H A M.

O worthy of a better life, no doubt
 Hereafter thine, we live again in thee.
 Great Source of blessings, let thy Servants now
 Depart in peace, since they have lived to see
 Thy saving grace upon their Son bestow'd.
 O Sarah, now I may rejoice to meet thee.

S A R A H.

Forgive me, Abraham! I have suffer'd greatly:

I 2

My

My brain was wilder'd with the dreadful tidings :
 The storm of passion roused my soul to frenzy :
 But all is past, and I am now most thankful.

O Isaac ever dear in life and death !
 I but this hour had vow'd, as frenzy wrought
 The dread idea in my burning brain,
 From this funereal pyre to rake thy bones
 Warm from the flame, and keep them ever here,
 Until this heart was cold,—as soon it would,
 If Grace divine had not reprieved thy doom.

And wast thou patient? Wast thou most resign'd
 To God's disposal? Did no sigh escape thee ?—
 O Abraham, tell me how my Son sustain'd
 The trying moment.

A B R A H A M,

Never Hero better ;
 He bore it nobly like a blessed Martyr ;
 Content to die when sovereign Will enjoin'd it,
 And now behold he hath his recompence ;
 And God accepts his patient resignation
 For real suffering and complete obedience.
 His resolution far exceeded mine :
 I look'd with wonder on his fortitude :
 He did not shrink before the uplifted fauchion,
 Though I was ready to dissolve in tears.

But,

But, Sarah, till our debts to Heaven are paid,
Awhile suspend we these parental raptures.
Although the trial of our faith be past,
And God himself hath spared the precious Victim
That he had late enjoin'd, a sacrifice
Remains unoffer'd.

CHORUS.

Surely now we need
A rich oblation to express our gratitude.

ABRAHAM.

And lo provided for the sacred purpose
I see a spotless youngling of the fold,
Caught by his stubborn horns in yonder thicket;
Conducted hither sure by God himself.
Go, Isaac, fetch the struggling victim hither,
By Heaven intended to supply thy place.
Him will I freely offer in thy stead
Upon this altar that was built for thee,

Mean while to introduce the hallow'd rite,
Assist me, Brethren, with your tuneful service.

CHORUS.

CHORAL SONG.

When God the frame of nature drew,
And this expanse of wonder grew,
As boundless power and counsel plann'd;

Crea-

Creation's goodly scene to close,
The human form at length arose
Beneath the sovereign Author's hand.

Though molded first of grosser clay,
Yet touch'd with reason's hallow'd ray,
On earth he sprung a peerless Guest :
In God's immediate image drawn
He rose to grace creation's dawn,
Though last of all his works the best.

Design'd superior rank to hold,
Beyond this lower sphere of earth
Aloof he cast his ardent eyes :
In all the pride of virtue bold,
He dared assert a nobler birth,
And sought communion with the skies :

Nor sought in vain ; from time to time
The Hosts that gird the eternal Shrine,
Employ'd in acts of grace and love,
For him forsook the starry clime,
And held the human chain divine.
Between this lower scene and fields above.

Around his bower an Eden smiled
Of vernal bloom without impair :
His heart was still serene and mild
Beyond the reach of pain and care ;

Of Love divine a favour'd Child,
Of God's peculiar grace an Heir.

He lived as heavenly Natures blest,
While Virtue yet remain'd his Guest:
Too soon did Vice his mind enthrall,
And dire transgression wrought his fall.
That form by heavenly glory graced,
Made only lower than the Seraph Choir,
By sin's ignoble stains debased
Lost the pure features of its holy Sire.

Then all the Bands of light forbore
With eye benign his steps to tend;
And God, array'd in beams of love before,
No longer deigning to be deem'd his Friend
His cheering form from human sight withdrew,
And shrin'd his presence from terrestrial view.

No more without an Eden smiled;
No more an Eden bloom'd within:
For now by Vice's lures beguiled,
And bound in humbling chains by Sin,
He now with servile fear address'd his Lord,
And shunn'd the presence he had once implored.

Though late a tender Sire esteem'd,
With willing service late obey'd,
He now to God a stern Task-master deem'd

With

With down-cast eyes reluctant homage paid :
 And by the blood of various victims slain,
 Of spotless lambs and heifers pure from stain,
 He strove Jehovah's angry gloom to charm,
 And soothe from vengeance his uplifted arm.

O Abraham by Heaven beloved,
 For true obedience, active faith approved,
 And thence the Father of the Faithful named !
 In vain by nature's bonds repress'd,
 When God the heroic duty claim'd,
 The noblest offering thou hast dared to yield,
 That e'er the storied rolls of time reveal'd,
 The dearest, purest, best.

Severely tempted thou hast not declined
 Thine Isaac's precious blood to spill ;
 And though thy God had milder fates assign'd,
 Though sacred promise better omen bore,
 And blessings manifold remain'd in store,
 Didst yield thine only Son to heavenly Will.

No doubt thy fixed faith control'd,
 That he, who bade the promised Heir be born,
 When o'er thy head a hundred years had roll'd,
 Sincere to ancient promise still
 Would every purpose vow'd fulfill,
 Nor aught impair the solemn counsel sworn.

Although

Although the free designs of Grace
 Surmounted human skill to trace;
 Though mortal science vainly scann'd
 What God's unbounded wisdom plann'd;
 Still didst thou trust the same Almighty Cause,
 From whom proceeded the severe behest,
 Who gave in primal time to Nature laws,
 And can, whene'er he sees it best,
 Change all Creation's course or bid it pause.

Lo now thy God, full oft repeated thine,
 Accepts thy service, and approves it well:
 Again from mercy's wide expanded shrine
 With thy selected seed he deigns to hold
 Sublime communion, as he held of old
 With our primeval Sires before they fell.

Again the Host of Angels bear
 The gracious tidings of the sovereign Mind
 Down to this lower sphere, of yore design'd
 And now renew'd for Virtue's pure domain;
 Again display the golden chain,
 That Heaven and Earth in union true may bind,
 With God connect all human kind,
 And make them objects of his guardian care.
 They publish now the more benign behest
 Of sacred fortune to thy future Seed;
 And in thy Son for better fates decreed
 Shall all the Nations of the World be blest.

Thine Isaac, offer'd by a Father's hand,
 But spared by Mercy from the impending stroke,
 Through long revolving time shall stand
 A pictured emblem to thy chosen Seed
 Of some Oblation, in divine esteem
 Of spotless innocence and worth supreme;
 Which in the long predestined hour shall bleed,
 To loose the Sons of Men from error's yoke,
 To soothe the wrath of Heaven, transgression close,
 And pay the debt that human nature owes.

For then shall God exact no more
 Of lambs and kids the streaming gore,
 That duly slain from day to day
 The price of human ransom pay.
 These rites to purer modes shall yield,
 And God as mercy's King reveal'd
 Shall on mankind impose an easier task,
 A milder treaty with his Children draw;
 Shall on their souls inscribe his holy law,
 And the pure service of their Reason ask,
 That living sacrifice, that best behoves
 The Sons of God, and what he most approves.

The Worthies old of human kind,
 For trials well supported here
 Removed to fill a nobler sphere
 The meed to moral grace assign'd,

Again

Again at virtue's second dawn
 Shall see the long involving gloom
 Of mental darkness from the world withdrawn;
 While o'er the face of earth, in vernal prime,
 That knows no failure from the lapse of time,
 Another Eden pure appears to bloom.

The Band of Angels ever on the wing
 At Mercy's call, on human weal intent,
 And still on errands of salvation bent,
 In mortal ears with glad accord shall sing
 Of God's recover'd love, of pardon seal'd,
 And peace divine to all the world reveal'd,

And while they see the human race
 Redeem'd for sin's inglorious thrall, *from*
 And wake to moral freedom's morn,
 Shall give such glory to the Sire of all
 For earth renew'd in virtue's nobler grace,
 As once they paid, when Nature first was born,

A B R A H A M.

So sacred counsels have reveal'd of old,
 And long tradition still records the tidings;
 Nor do I doubt the golden oracle.
 For a long line of ages God is pleas'd
 To accept of such oblations for atonement,
 Until the fulness of predestined time;

When

When for the sins of Men one great Oblation,
 More pure and precious even than thou, my Son,
 Shall yield himself in willing martyrdom;
 And when once offer'd shall remain a full
 And universal Sacrifice for ever.

F I N I S.

4 AP 54

ERRATA.

P. iii, l. 7 (*read*) apparent design it—&c.
 33, l. 18, merits.

